

# WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD NORTH COAST REGION

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

November 2001

*Board Member Beverly Wasson Reappointed.* On October 31, 2001, Board Member Beverly Wasson was reappointed to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, pending Senate confirmation. Wasson fills the Irrigated Agriculture seat and was initially appointed to the Board on May 26, 1999. Her term will expire September 30, 2005.

### CLEANUPS AND SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

#### Autumn Waterfest, Santa Rosa

[Staff contact: Mark Bartson]

On October 20, 2001, the Regional Water Board sponsored the "Autumn Waterfest," a public outreach event in the Roseland area of Santa Rosa. The event was planned by Regional Water Board staff in cooperation with the Citizen's Cleanup Coalition and other interested residents and business owners. The primary purpose of the event was to provide a forum for staff to present updates on the various cleanup site investigations that are underway in the area. There are 24 cleanup sites in the Roseland area ranging from former gas stations to solvent plumes.



(Students Barbara Millea and Laurie Brown demonstrate a groundwater model)



(Stephen Bargsten makes "edible aquifers" for participants)

In addition, the Sonoma County Water Agency participated in this event to provide updated information on their investigation under the Roseland Plan of Action.

The event also included displays and informational booths on water conservation, redevelopment efforts and crime prevention. Skilled volunteers provided music and other entertainment. Detailed informational sessions were provided in an adjacent classroom on various topics including Laguna watershed information (presented by an expert with the City of Santa Rosa's irrigation project), an update on cleanups and investigation in the former Santa Rosa Naval Air Station (by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

The Roseland Lions Club held a pancake breakfast before the event to provide added incentive for people to get out of their homes on a brisk Saturday morning.

## **West College Avenue/Clover Drive, Santa Rosa, Public Meeting**

[Staff contact: Mark Bartson]

The Regional Water Board held a public meeting on November 8, 2001, at the Finley Center, 2060 West College Avenue, Santa Rosa. Regional Water Board staff updated the residents on the investigation of groundwater contamination in the West College Avenue/Clover Drive neighborhood. The update covered all aspects of the investigation, including current well monitoring results, results of indoor air sampling, soil-gas monitoring results, work by responsible parties and health concerns outreach work by Sonoma County.

The Sonoma County Environmental Health Department and the Sonoma County Department of Health were in attendance to address health concerns and to update residents on work done with the \$100,000 from the Cleanup and Abatement Account for health concern outreach.

### ***WATERSHED PROTECTION DIVISION***

## **Russian River Watershed Surface Water Pesticide Monitoring Program**

[Staff contact: Scott Gergus]

The purpose of the Russian River Watershed Surface Water Pesticide Monitoring Program is to determine if pesticides are entering surface waters in the Russian River Watershed. On June 25, 2001, nine perennial tributaries to the Russian River were sampled for 14 pesticides commonly used on vineyards in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. The sampled tributaries had to satisfy several prerequisites making them eligible for sampling. These prerequisites included perennial flow, active vineyards bordering the waterway, and sampling access from a public roadway. Creeks meeting these criteria with follow-up water sampling were Forsythe Creek, West Fork Russian River, York Creek, Windsor Creek, Mark West Creek, Porter Creek, Green Valley Creek, and Atascadero Creek. In decreasing order of pounds of active ingredient applied in Sonoma County, sampled pesticides included methyl bromide, Glyphosate, Mancozeb, copper, Simazine, Oxyfluorfen, Oryzalin, Fenamiphos, Iprodione, Diuron, Metam-sodium, Diazinon, Chlorpyrifos, and Phosmet. North Coast Laboratories and Basic Laboratory were used to analyze the water samples. The laboratories did not have the capability to analyze for the pesticides Cyprodinil and Myclobutanil. Analysis for pesticide breakdown products was not performed because of excessive cost. Review of the pesticide sampling results from North Coast Laboratories and Basic

Laboratory indicated that none of the selected pesticides were detected.

## **Santa Rosa Area Municipal Storm Water Permit**

[Staff contact: John Short]

On September 28, 2001, staff received a permit renewal application for the reissuance of the Santa Rosa area municipal storm water permit. The existing permit, which regulates discharges from the storm drain system to surface water, is due to be renewed in the spring of 2002. The permit includes the City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County and the Sonoma County Water Agency as co-permittees. It requires these entities to conduct community outreach, implement storm water monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities and perform other tasks intended to reduce levels of pollutants contained in urban storm water.

The re-application contains several substantial program changes. The most substantial proposed change is the incorporation of a program to require that storm water runoff from certain types of new development be treated onsite prior to discharge into the storm drain system. This is consistent with policy approved by the State Water Board and incorporated into permits from other Regional Water Boards. Staff are reviewing the application package and will continue to work with the co-permittees in developing the new permit.

## **Update on Dairy Waste Control Activities in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties**

[Staff contact: Ben Zabinsky]

Ben Zabinsky, Water Resource Control Engineer in the Humboldt, Eel, Trinity, Klamath Core-Regulatory Unit, is working with dairies in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. About 100 dairies exist in these counties combined, most located in the Lower Eel River by Ferndale. Many of the dairy farms in the area are old and only a portion of them have waste control structures designed to control contaminated runoff. State regulations require dairy operators to contain all contaminated runoff from their operations to preclude migration into local waterways and degradation of water quality. The weather presents a unique challenge to dairies in this part of the region. Winter rains prompt some farmers to keep animals confined so they do not tear up the muddy pastures. Concentrating animals in confined spaces as opposed to open pastures creates a need to manage the waste generated in the confined space. The problem is compounded because wet fields prevent operators from spreading manure and irrigating with wastewater as they do when fields are dry. Finally, heavy rainfall in the winter can transport contaminated wastewater offsite and into local waterways if proper containment measures are not taken.

Zabinsky has been doing random inspections of dairy facilities and identifying those dairies that present the greatest threat to water quality. Once identified, the operators will be referred to the proper technical assistance agencies, such as the Natural Resources Conservation District, in order to work toward a solution to their waste handling problems. Grants available for controlling nonpoint source pollution present a particularly attractive solution to financially strapped farmers.

### **Lawsuit Filed by the City of Healdsburg**

[Staff contact: John Short]

The City of Healdsburg (City) has filed suit against the Regional Water Board, seeking declaratory and injunctive relief.



(Basalt Pond, Healdsburg)

The City sued as a preemptory defensive move against the Regional Water Board in the face of the City's failure to meet deadlines in a Cease and Desist Order concerning the City's wastewater discharge operations.

The Cease and Desist Order addresses a series of discharges of wastewater to the Russian River that resulted when floodwaters breached the City's wastewater disposal pond levee.

The City seeks a judicial declaration that its existing and planned wastewater activities are consistent with the Porter-Cologne Act, and that the Environmental Impact Report it prepared for these activities complies with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The City also seeks injunctive relief to protect itself from any potential enforcement action against the City for its failure to comply with the Cease and Desist Order. The parties agreed to a brief Temporary Restraining Order and Tolling Agreement on the statute of limitations regarding CEQA, to enable the parties to attempt to work out their differences outside

the courtroom. The hearing on the Preliminary Injunction is scheduled for November 20, 2001.



(Picture reflecting breached levee, Basalt Pond, Healdsburg)

The Town of Windsor (Windsor) has requested to intervene in the lawsuit filed by the City of Healdsburg (City) against the Regional Water Board over its proposal to discharge secondary treated wastewater into a new gravel pit adjacent to the Russian River.

Windsor opposes Healdsburg's proposed wastewater project because of the potential impacts on its drinking water wells located immediately downstream. Healdsburg's environmental impact report for the project acknowledged that all of the secondary treated wastewater from the new gravel pit will flow into the Russian River and surrounding groundwater aquifer. Concerns have been expressed by Windsor, the Regional Water Board, and surrounding landowners. Healdsburg is attempting to implement its project by obtaining a court order to allow it. Windsor has upgraded to tertiary treatment for its own wastewater treatment, used storage reservoirs away from the river, expanded beneficial reuse and obtained an NPDES Permit for seasonal discharge to Mark West Creek which flows into the Russian River.

### **Update on the Geysers Recharge Project**

[Staff contact: Paul Keiran]

Work on the Geysers Recharge Project for re-use of Santa Rosa's highly treated wastewater continues without major interruption. Pipe-laying work has begun on the north end of the Audubon Bird Sanctuary Land. During the recent rains, in which over three inches fell in this area, the contractor worked diligently in attempting to prevent turbid storm water runoff from discharging to local creeks. Some mildly turbid discharges did occur at the contractor's staging area.

Pipe is in and paving is planned on Alexander Valley Road between West Sausal Road and Lower Pine Flat Road. Both the north and south Russian River



crossing vertical tubes are now complete; the horizontal pipe casing for the south crossing has been installed. Both sites are now in demobilization mode for the winter.

The recent rains did result in turbid discharges at the West Slough crossing along Kinley Road. Spoils from the Healdsburg alignment are being disposed of at the main project staging area on Healdsburg Avenue in north Healdsburg, where contractors are presently working to seed the pile and sandbag critical drainage areas.

## **WATERSHED MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

### **Sonoma County General Plan**

[Staff contact: Rebecca Fitzgerald]

Sonoma County is beginning an update to its General Plan, which is expected to be completed by July 2003. The current General Plan was last updated in 1989. The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) is currently developing a list of issues the update will address, including removal of riparian cover to accommodate agricultural cultivation; review the designations, standards, and permit procedures of the Riparian Corridor Critical Habitat designation; updating biotic resource maps showing verifiable locations of important habitats; implementing broader policies/programs to address habitat protection and enhancement; reviewing permit process for wetland projects where mitigation measures required by the federal government differs significantly from county requirements; reviewing issues of reduced crop diversity, increased pesticide use, and loss of soils and habitat; reviewing studies of groundwater supply; conversion of timberland to agricultural cultivation; water supply analysis; and reviewing current policy regarding the expansion of wastewater systems to Occidental, Russian River area, and elsewhere.

### **Aluminum in the Russian River Watershed**

[Staff contact: Reg Cullen]

Concerned with impacts to steelhead, chinook, and Coho salmon, the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) contracted with the Regional Water Board to produce a staff report leading to an amendment to the Basin Plan for more stringent water quality objectives for aluminum in the Russian River watershed. Challenges to the generation of the staff report include tremendous data gaps for aluminum in the Russian River, uncertainty about the sources of aluminum (are the sources point or nonpoint, natural or man-made) and the fact that the biogeochemical cycle of aluminum is complicated and poorly understood.

Aluminum is a very common element in the earth's crust and is the most abundant metal, but can be harmful, toxic, or even lethal to salmonids when concentrations in fish habitat are high and/or pH strays from 7.0. Aluminum can clog the gills of aquatic species and affect oxygen uptake and neurological function. For the protection of salmonids (steelhead and salmon), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends long-term concentrations of aluminum less than 87 ppb and 750 ppb for one-hour concentrations of aluminum. The current drinking water objective of aluminum in the Basin Plan is 1,000 ppb, clearly not protective of threatened and endangered salmonids.



(Reg Cullen using an Eckman Dredge in Lake Mendocino)

Monitoring for aluminum will provide a better understand the distribution and concentrations of aluminum in the Russian River. A synoptic sampling effort retrieved water from 17 sites along the Russian River during two days in June 2001. The laboratory results showed aluminum concentrations were highest, about 650 ppb, in the East Fork Russian River below Lake Mendocino and Coyote Valley Dam. Aluminum concentrations decreased until it was not detectable (less than 100 ppb) below Geyserville then increased to about 300 ppb near the confluence of the Russian River with the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

The high concentrations of aluminum in the East Fork Russian River may be related to oxidation-reduction reactions at the sediment/water interface within Lake Mendocino. Lake Mendocino is stratified during the summer with the upper water (epilimnion) warm and high in dissolved oxygen while the lower water (hypolimnion) is cool and depleted of oxygen. In September, Lake Mendocino is similar to two lakes sandwiched together horizontally with the lower half anoxic in September with oxygen levels at 0 mg/L.

The monitoring program for aluminum includes sediment sampling from Lake Mendocino to determine if the sediments trapped within the lake were releasing aluminum during anoxic conditions. Staff used an

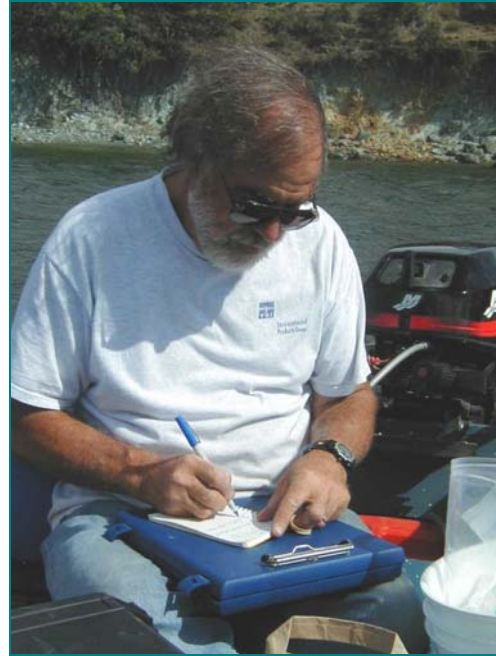
Eckman Dredge to retrieve lake bed material. A laboratory is currently analyzing these sediments for aluminum and sulfide concentrations. Sulfide concentration will provide insight into the oxidation-reduction potential for aluminum in Lake Mendocino. A strong relationship between the low dissolved oxygen concentrations in Lake Mendocino and high aluminum concentrations could lead to identifying a source of aluminum released into the Russian River.

Natural sources of aluminum in the Russian River could be particulate matter associated with soil in the watershed. Possible anthropogenic sources of aluminum in the Russian River include wastewater treatment plants and drinking water purveyors that use aluminum as a flocculating agent in their treatment train and gravel washing or crushing operation. Staff have agreement from the City of Santa Rosa and the City of Windsor to monitor their wastewater treatment plants for aluminum. Staff will soon visit the Syar gravel pits in Healdsburg to sample surface water for aluminum. Staff also anticipate collecting sufficient aluminum samples during the next year so a determination can be made regarding sources of aluminum and existing concentrations within the watershed.

### **Sampling on Lake Pillsbury**

[Staff contact: Peter Otis]

As part of the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), MtBE, sediment, and nutrient sampling is being performed on Lake Pillsbury on the Eel River system and Ruth Lake on the Mad River system. To define the sampling depths for the MtBE study, vertical profiles for temperature and dissolved oxygen throughout the water column are obtained using a multi-parameter datalogger.



(Peter W. Otis, Regional Monitoring Coordinator, recording vertical profile data on Lake Pillsbury)

Since there are no underground storage tanks near the lake shorelines, it is presumed that the source of the MtBE is recreational watercraft. Although the study is still in progress, preliminary data indicate that MtBE is present in the water column of both lakes, but levels below both the primary and secondary Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). Currently, the primary MCL for the protection of human health set by the California Department of Health Services is 13 micrograms per liter or 13 parts per billion. The secondary MCL established as a taste and odor threshold is 5 micrograms per liter or 5 parts per billion. MtBE concentrations detected up to this point in the study are below 1.5 micrograms per liter or 1.5 parts per billion.

### **Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Unit, Update**

[Staff contact: Bob Klamt]

The Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Unit is gathering the information for the watershed assessments under the North Coast Watershed Assessment Program (NCWAP) for the Gualala River, Redwood Creek, and Mattole River. Drafts are due during November for internal agency review. The Legislature will receive the final drafts on January 1, 2002, at which time the drafts will be made public and be available for the peer review process. Final reports are due May 1, 2002.

Contracts for the SWAMP program are being finalized and we are recruiting staff internally to assist in the sampling effort. The stations and parameters have been revised in response to input from the staff to better address some specific areas and problems.

Samplers will be trained on clean techniques in early November, with sampling to begin shortly thereafter.

The Watershed Management Initiative Chapter revision is in progress, due by Thanksgiving. Grant priorities and needs will be expressed in the Chapter, as well as current monitoring and assessment activities.

#### *TIMBER HARVEST DIVISION*

#### **Pacific Lumber Company**

[Staff contact: Frank Reichmuth]

On October 18, 2001, the State Water Board heard the petition of the 13267 order issued by the Assistant Executive Officer of the Regional Water Board for trend, compliance, and stream crossing water quality monitoring in connection with Timber Harvest Plan I-97-520 HUM on the South Fork Elk River. The State Water Board upheld the tentative order that was issued on October 4, 2001, with minor changes. The order upholds the Regional Water Board's authority to issue monitoring and reporting programs for timber operations.

At issue is PALCO's plan to cut trees from a 705-acre parcel known as the "Hole in the Headwaters." The parcel is surrounded by trees protected under the Headwaters Agreement to protect ancient redwoods in the Headwaters Forest south of Eureka.

Although PALCO received permission to log the property, staff of the Regional Water Board raised questions earlier this year about whether the runoff from the operation could degrade the South Fork Elk River.

The State Water Board's ruling will have a broad impact on timber operations across the state, as the ruling sets a precedent for monitoring water quality downstream of timber harvest plans.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY COMPLAINTS/ ORDERS**

There was one Administrative Civil Liability Complaint issued during the month of October. Below is a brief description of that ACLC.

On October 18, 2001, an Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (ACLC) was issued to Redwood Oil Company for the site at 455 Yolanda Avenue in Santa Rosa. The ACLC was issued in the amount of

\$25,000, and the completion of a supplemental environmental project (SEP) with a value of not less than \$25,000. The SEP consists of the dedication of land adjacent to the Laguna de Santa Rosa and behind 5640 Sebastopol Road and includes native plant restoration. The property will be at least 25 feet by 150 feet and the total value of the project will be at least \$25,000, including the value of the land and the cost of the planting and maintenance. The ACLC was issued for failure to comply with Cleanup and Abatement Order No. R1-2000-0034.

## **CLEANUP AND ABATEMENT ORDERS**

There was one Cleanup and Abatement Orders issued during the month of October. Below is a summary of that Order.

#### **Cleanup and Abatement Order, Sierra Pacific Industries Sawmill, Arcata**

[Staff contact: Dean Prat]

Sierra Pacific Industries owns and operates a sawmill adjacent to Mad River Slough on Humboldt Bay near the City of Arcata. Sawmill operations include the use of wood treatment chemicals to control sap stain on cut lumber. Past chemical handling practices have resulted in the discharge of pentachlorophenol and tetrachlorophenol to local groundwater and Humboldt Bay.



(Sierra Pacific Industries, Arcata)

A Cleanup and Abatement Order was issued on October 31, 2001, to provide guidance for investigation and cleanup of waste discharges at the site.





(Sierra Pacific Industries, Arcata)

## **CLEAN WATER ACT SECTION 401 CERTIFICATIONS**

There were six Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certifications and two Denials Without Prejudice issued during the month of October.

Information regarding all proposed certifications is available at our Internet web site at:

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb1/notice404.html>

## **CALIFORNIA WATER CODE SECTION 13267 LETTER ORDERS**

There was one California Water Code section 13267(b) Letter Order issued during the month of October. Below is a summary of that Letter Order.

A 13267(b) Letter Order was issued on October 19, 2001, for the Gravier's Chevron in Laytonville, Mendocino County. The Order requires Gravier Enterprises to submit a long-term corrective action plan (CAP) by December 1, 2001, because of excessive wastewater flows, which overload the on-site septic system and result in surfacing septic tank effluent. The Order also requires submittal of a Report of Waste Discharge prior to commencement of corrective work proposed in the long-term CAP.

## **SPILLS, COMPLAINTS, AND INVESTIGATIONS**

There were no spills reported on the Sanitary Sewer Overflow and Spill Data Management System since the last report.

## **UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK CLEANUP FUND PROGRAM**

There was one letter of commitment issued during the month of October 2001.

## **OUTREACH ACTIVITIES/ MISCELLANEOUS**

- Andrew Jensen, Environmental Scientist, recently traveled to Brunswick, Georgia to attend a two-week long course offered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), titled the Advanced Environmental Crimes Training Program (AECTP). The EPA Criminal Investigations Division (EPA-CID) developed the two-week AECTP to meet the growing demand of state and local agencies throughout the country to prepare themselves for the complexities associated with multimedia environmental investigations. Through classroom and practical exercise activities, students are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills and techniques necessary to investigate and prosecute environmental crimes successfully.

The EPA covered all costs associated with course registration, travel, lodging, and meals while attending the program. The course had 29 students from around the United States, Canada, and even Sweden. Approximately 50 percent of the students were professional environmental specialists working for various regulatory agencies, and the remaining 50 percent of the students were law enforcement officers and firefighters working specifically in environmental crime units.

Some of the topics covered over the two week period included: Criminal Provisions of Environmental Law; Criminal Investigations and Evidence Collection; Multimedia and Criminal Investigations; Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; Environmental Informants; Incidental Command; Advanced Interviewing; Cognitive Interviewing; Neuro-Linguistics; Search and Seizure; Lab Fraud; and Trial and Witness Preparation. The course was found to be extremely informative, offered

excellent practical experience in a wide range of environmental regulations, enforcement, and prosecution.

- On October 22, 2001, Susan Warner, Tuck Vath, and Tom Dunbar attended a reception in Eureka, which was attended by approximately 35 members of the Eureka Chamber of Commerce. Topics discussed included implementation and compliance with upcoming federal Clean Water Act storm water regulations for small communities and industries located within small communities, the need for individual permittees to scrutinize their own operations and comply with permits and the recent State Water Board Order requiring water quality monitoring at timber harvest sites in order to avoid exposure to enforcement actions. The Eureka Chamber of Commerce sponsored the reception and Susan Warner was the featured speaker.

- Dave Hope of the Timber Harvest Division participated in a fish passage workshop regarding project design and construction issues on October 23 and 24, 2001, in Santa Cruz County. On the second day, Hope led a field tour to eight completed fish barrier removal projects and two unmitigated culvert crossings to discuss the technical aspects of design and construction of the projects.

- On October 29, 2001, the State Water Resources Control Board's Compliance and Enforcement Unit's quarterly roundtable was held in Region 1 and included a field trip to a local land development project. Several State and Regional Water Board staff members participated in the field trip and evaluated erosion control measures for homesite grading, vineyard development and road construction.

The erosion control work was required in two California Water Code Section 13267(b) Orders, which were issued by the Executive Officer earlier this year. There was a discussion about the Regional Water Board's vineyard enforcement program including the multi-agency vineyard enforcement task force.



(State and Regional Water Board staff standing on spoils, from road removal that was hauled to a ridge overlooking Healdsburg and Mount St. Helena)

A highlight of the trip was observing heavy equipment operations and the removal of approximately one-quarter mile of new road and numerous stream culvert crossings. The roads and vineyard were constructed last year without proper permits, for grading and stream alteration, which are required by Sonoma County and the California Department of Fish and Game.

Roads and culverts were removed because they were not constructed to proper standards and could not be stabilized to prevent further water quality impacts. The road and vineyard erosion resulted in the discharge of a large volume of sediment that impacted a salmon and steelhead spawning stream which is tributary to the Russian River near Healdsburg. Russian River salmon and steelhead are listed as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. County, state and federal agencies are coordinating cleanup and enforcement efforts. The Sonoma County District Attorney is in the process of negotiating a settlement with the dischargers that may include penalties for water pollution and the recovery of staff costs for the various agencies.

## **PUBLIC FILE REVIEW**

From October 1, 2001, through November 1, 2001, two written requests were made for review of the Regional Water Board's records. These files were made available pursuant to the California Public Records Act. In addition, a total of 30 people came into the office and requested file review.



## **PROMOTIONS/STAFF HIRING**

There were no new hires during the month of October 2001.

## **NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER WATER BOARD MEETINGS**

There will be no Regional Water Board meeting held in November. The December 6, 2001, Board meeting will be held in Eureka.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our web-site at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov>.